

# **General Assembly meets in Edinburgh from tomorrow**

**The General Assembly will debate 'radical proposals' to future-proof the Church of Scotland for generations to come when the annual meeting opens tomorrow.**

Commissioners, made up of ministers, elders and deacons, will debate and vote on two 'bold' plans to reform governance and the practices of the charity, which can trace its roots to 1560.

The objective is to improve the welfare of the whole Church, ensuring the proper stewardship of resources and making mission work in a local setting a top priority.

Rev Dr George Whyte, Principal Clerk to the General Assembly, said :“The intention is that wherever you live in Scotland, you will be seeing a Church which is deeply committed to the communities it seeks to serve and up for the challenge of these times.”

Proposed changes include the creation of a 12-person trustee body to hold responsibility for finances.

The number of presbyteries could be reduced from 45 to 12 and Kirk Sessions could be reduced in size with local churches retaining more resources to support mission work.

A Growth Fund of between £20million to £25 million, has been proposed to plant new worshipping communities and to fund new work with children, young people and young adults. The

fund will also be used for Church projects that support communities across Scotland.

Commissioners will be asked to consider plans to reduce administration costs by 20-30% and merge four of the Church's Councils into two.

They will also consider whether CrossReach, the operating name of the Social Care Council, should become a more arms-length, self-sustaining organisation.

Dr Whyte said: "This General Assembly will be asked to make bold plans for the future of the Church of Scotland.

"There will be proposals to invest in growth, to work in new ways and to put mission right at the top our priorities."

"If Commissioners accept the proposals the Church will see a radical shift of resources and energy towards the local church."

The General Assembly is a key date in the Church calendar here in Edinburgh and people enjoy watching the proceedings for the passionate debates, special guests, festivities and large-scale worship.

Moderator, Rt Rev Susan Brown, will formally open proceedings at the General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh.

Her first act will be to hand over the ring and chain of office to Rev Colin Sinclair who is taking over the role. Rev Sinclair is the minister of Palmerston Place Church. We spoke to him when his new role was announced last October.

*The minister of Palmerston Place Church is Moderator Designate for 2019-20 We spoke to him this morning [pic.twitter.com/V3qpr4gIlt](https://pic.twitter.com/V3qpr4gIlt)*

*– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [October 9, 2018](#)*



Reverend Colin Sinclair from Palmerston Place Church is the Moderator Designate

He will chair proceedings for the next six days and thereafter serve as the Kirk's ambassador at home and abroad until May 2020.

His Grace Richard Walter John Montagu Douglas Scott, The Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, KBE, DL, FSA, FRSE, will represent HM The Queen as the Lord High Commissioner to the Assembly.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is expected to attend the opening day along with Scotland's Lord Provosts and distinguished visitors from around the world.

Ms Sturgeon will address the General Assembly on Wednesday.

Topics that are likely to be discussed at the General Assembly include welfare, asylum seekers, refugees, climate justice, interfaith relations, the European Union and democracy itself.

CrossReach is celebrating 150 years of providing social care and St Cuthbert's Parish Church in Princes Street Gardens is hosting an interactive exhibition to mark the anniversary.

At the Heart & Soul Festival in Princes Street Gardens on Sunday, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson and Scottish Labour MSP Iain Gray will be in conversation with Very Rev Dr Lorna Hood OBE on their commitment to remembering the survivors, victims and relatives of the Srebrenica genocide.

Dr Hood, who was Moderator of the General Assembly in 2013-14, will be chatting with Scottish Labour MSP Anas Sarwar about islamophobia and the language used to describe people of other faiths.

Former Kirk Moderator, Alison Elliot CBE FRSE, will be speaking with Rev Dr Richard Frazer, author of [Travels With A](#)

[Stick](#) (an account of his Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage) and Mary Miller, author of *Jane Haining – a Life of Love and Courage*, on journeys of faith.

Rev Michael Mair, parish minister for Edinburgh St David's Broomhouse church, will be speaking with young people on faith and activism: the world movement for action on climate change. One of the young people joining Michael on the day will be Heather O'Connor, a theology and English literature student and an outspoken voice on climate change.